

Kenyan MP's Defeat Marines 2 to 1 in Soccer Match

By: JO2 Andrea Leahy, USS Germantown Public Affairs

Soldiers from the Kenyan Security Force defeated 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit Military Police two goals to one in a soccer match Sunday, January 11, 2004 in the East Kenya town of Makowe during its recent training with Kenyan military forces as part of the annual exercise Edged Mallet.

The troops arranged to play each other during bilateral weapons training a few days earlier, said 1st Lt. Justin Powell, the officer in charge of the Marine Military Police detachment.

“On behalf of the Marines and the Navy, we want to say ‘thank you’ for your hospitality. Thank you, and it was much fun,” he said to the Kenyan soldiers after the game.

“It was awesome,” he said later. “We weren’t playing to win, we were just playing to have a good time... a good show of faith.”

The Marines scored their one goal off a penalty kick in the game’s second 20-minute half. The Kenyan Soldiers scored both of their goals during the first half.

“To the players, well done,” said Kenyan Security Force Commander 2nd Lt. H.B. Bowen while addressing participants after the game. “Those who got a score, I’ll remember you forever.”

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His words drew laughter from the perspiration-covered Marines and Soldiers. Bowen did not participate in the game. He stayed on the sidelines with more than 100 Makowe residents, mostly young men and boys, who appeared as spectators. A herd of cattle and a few goats grazed just out of bounds, and the goal posts were fashioned from rough tree branches without the luxury of nets.

Despite their primitive playing field, the Kenyan Soldiers play soccer on a regular basis. Kenyan striker Pvt. Patson Njorge said he and his teammates play at least once a week. They also run in formation early every morning.

“[The Marines] have to do more practice to be good,” he said. “They’re getting tired quickly.” Njorge admitted his team’s experience playing in intense heat probably gave them a slight advantage.

“They have a lot of determination. They never give up,” he said of the Marines. He and several other Kenyan players also praised the skills of the Marine goalie, Staff Sergeant Jose Orozco.

“I just got in front of the ball,” said Orozco, who started playing organized soccer at the age of eight. “They were pretty good, a lot quicker than we were.”

Before the game, Bowen told the Marines he could run four cross-country miles in ten minutes. While the Kenyan commander’s troops were showing the same speed on the soccer field, Marine Staff Sergeant Dustin Henderson told Bowen, “You know, I ran five clicks in 10 minutes this morning. Naw, just kidding. I like to run, but running doesn’t like me.”

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Henderson played a few minutes but cheered during most of the match.

“That’s the way to use your hands,” he joked. “Whatever works to stop the ball—the American philosophy.”

According to Henderson, the game was a success no matter what the score because everyone had a good time and no one got hurt.

Bowen added, “We are not looking at the issue of competition. We are simply playing to have fun and create rapport between the US Marine Force and the Security Force Kenya.”

The Marines, part of 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), participated in Edged Mallet alongside USS Germantown (LSD 42) and USS Jarrett (FFG 33). They are currently deployed to the Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Commander, U.S. Fifth Fleet area of responsibility in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

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